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A LETTER OF ŠAMAŠ-ŠUM-UKÎN TO HIS BROTHER SARDANAPALUS.

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Among the cuneiform documents bearing upon the reign of Šamaš-šum-ukîn, king of Babylon, whose rebellion, though it ended in his defeat and tragic death, shook the Assyrian empire to its foundations and paved the way for its ultimate downfall, is a brief letter addressed by the Babylonian monarch to his brother Sardanapalus, king of Assyria. The text of this letter, which in the catalogue of the British Museum bears the number 80, 7-19, 17, was first published, in 1886, by Father Strassmaier in his *Alphabetisches Verzeichniss*, No. 6702.

Mr. Samuel Alden Smith, in April, 1888, republished the text, accompanied by an attempt at translation and a commentary, in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology* (Vol. X, pp. 312 sq.). His translation, omitting the formula of greeting, is as follows: "Sin-balasu-iḳbi, honored (?) before my brother has backbitten. About it I have heard. May my brother imprison him until I shall come (?). The number of the Šitini to my brother I have sent." Professor Sayce's excellent remarks as to the desirability of paying due regard to the demands of common sense in translating cuneiform texts¹ apply here with full force.

Dr. C. F. Lehmann, who publishes the text in his monograph on Šamaš-šum-ukîn (Pl. XI), merely renders (ii, 58) the first six lines, which contain the usual formula of greeting, and frankly confesses his inability to understand the remainder owing to a number of obscure terms contained in it. He remarks, however, that Mr. S. A. Smith's rendering can hardly be considered satisfactory. Professor Peter Jensen, of Marburg, includes this letter among the texts of Šamaš-šum-ukîn translated by him in Schrader's *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek* (Vol. III, i, pp. 204-7). He renders: "(As for) Sin-balatsu-iḳbi, the ḥannaku belonging to my brother, I have heard the charge against him. Let my

¹ *Transactions of the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists*, Vol. II, p. 175.

brother have patience until I decide (?) how (the matter stands) and announce the preservation of our life (our welfare) to my brother.”² A footnote contains the explanation that the letter probably refers to an attempt at assassination, or at least to some seditious procedure, on the part of a certain Sin-balatsu-iqbi, directed against Sardanapalus and Šamaš-šum-ukīn, the punishment of which has been committed by the Assyrian monarch to his brother. Professor Jensen is doubtful as to the meaning of several words, and it is evident that he offers merely a tentative rendering.

The text has since been published in Professor Robert F. Harper's *Corpus Epistolarum* (No. 426), and it now seems possible to overcome the difficulties it presents by the aid of parallel passages to be found in Professor Harper's valuable work.

I would offer the following translation :

To the king my brother!
 Letter of Šamaš-šum-ukīn!
 A hearty greeting to my brother!
 May Bel, Belit, Nebo, Tašmet, and Nanā bless my brother!
 Sin-balātsu-iqbi is here. I understand that a report concerning him will reach my brother. Let my brother wait until I make an investigation. I shall send my brother full particulars.

TRANSLITERATION.

Ana šarri aḫīja!
 Duppu Šamaš-šum-ukīn!
 Bel, Belit, Nabû, Tašmetu u
 Nana ana aḫīja likrubû!
 Sin-balātsu-iqbi ḥannaka. Ina pān
 aḫīja dibbi ibāši ina muḫḫišu. Asseml.
 Aḫû'a liqqā adû aḫāraḡāni. Mīnu
 ša šitīni ana aḫīja ašaparāni.

The letter must, of course, be referred to the period before the great revolt, when the royal brothers were on terms of at least external amity, and the situation would seem to be as follows :

Sin-balātsu-iqbi was apparently regarded by the Assyrian office of secret intelligence as a suspicious character, and Šamaš-šum-ukīn learns in some way that a report, probably reflecting on

² "Den Sin-balātsu-iqbi, den ḥannaku, der meinem Bruder gehörig—die Anklage, die gegen ihn vorliegt, habe ich gehört. Mein Bruder möge sich gedulden, bis dass ich entscheiden(?), wie (es damit ist) und unseres Lebens Erhaltung (Wohlergehen) (?) meinem Bruder melden werde."

his loyalty, was about to be sent to Nineveh. The king of Babylon, who may have had excellent reasons for desiring to protect the accused and to avoid an investigation, endeavors to forestall such action by undertaking to examine into the affair himself.

Who this Sin-balāṣṣu-iqbī was is not altogether clear, but sufficient material is extant upon which to base a very probable conjecture with regard to him.

According to Bezold's *Catalogue* (p. 1838) the tablet 82, 5-22, 131 contains part of a letter to the king concerning public affairs in the city of Erech, and mentions, among others, Šamaš-šum-ukīn, Nabū-zer-iddina, Sin-balāṣṣu-iqbī, Kudurru, and Bel-ibnī, son of Nabū-kudurri-uṣur. The gulf district (māt Tamtīm) is also mentioned. Kudurru was doubtless the governor of Erech to whom Sin-tabnī-uṣur, governor of Ur, applies for reinforcements at the time of Šamaš-šum-ukīn's rebellion (see my *Epistolary Literature*, Part I, pp. 135, 148). This Kudurru had a son named Nabū-zer-iddina³ (K. 5457, obv. 14; Winckler's *Sammlung von Keilschrifttexten*, p. 55). Bel-ibnī may have been the well-known general of Sardanapalus, who was governor of the gulf district about this time.

In another letter (83, 1-18, 21; Bezold's *Catalogue*, p. 1856), addressed to the king by Nabū-bel-šumāte, mention is made of Na'id-Marduk, Sin-balāṣṣu-iqbī, and Natānu, king of the Uddā or Tamdā. It is possible that the writer of this letter, Nabū-bel-šumāte, may be the famous Chaldean adversary of Sardanapalus, whose uncle, Na'id-Marduk, was made king of the gulf district by Esarhaddon in 680 B. C. Yet another letter (K. 724 = Harper's *Letters*, No. 445) reads as follows: "Nabū and Marduk bless my lord the prince! Nabu-naṣir the chamberlain (?) reports that Sin-balāṣṣu-iqbī, son of Ningal-iddina, has sent by the charioteer one mina of gold to Sala . . . the prefect of the prince's . . . what is the pleasure of my lord the king?" Now, Ningal-iddina was the name of the loyal governor of Ur who was besieged by Nabū-zer-līšir in the first year of Esarhaddon, 680 B. C. He was undoubtedly the father of Sin-tabnī-uṣur, who probably succeeded him, and, at any rate, was appointed governor of Ur in the month of Ab, 651 B. C. (See my *Epistolary Literature*, Part I, p. 149).⁴ If, now, we can identify

³ He had another son named Nabū-šum-ukīn (Harper's *Letters*, No. 469, rev. 12).

⁴ Sin-tabnī-uṣur mentions his father Ningal-iddina in a letter (K. 1621 b, l. 11) published in Winckler's *Sammlung von Keilschrifttexten*, Vol. II, p. 19.

the Sin-balāṭṣu-iqbī of Šamaš-šum-ukīn's letter as the son of Ningal-iddina and the brother of Sin-tabnī-uṣur, the situation becomes somewhat clearer. Sin and Ningal were the special local deities of Ur, and such a group of family names would tend to show a connection with the old aristocracy of the city. As a man of high rank, belonging to a noble family of southern Babylonia, the son and the brother, respectively, of two governors of Ur, Sin-balāṭṣu-iqbī would naturally possess considerable influence and would be in a position to render good service to the cause of Šamaš-šum-ukīn. As a matter of fact, Kudurru, governor of Erech, in a letter to King Sardanapalus states that he has received a message from Sin-tabnī-uṣur to the effect that an emissary of Šamaš-šum-ukīn, engaged in disseminating sedition through the country, has approached him with the view of engaging him in the treasonable design; that a portion of the district under his authority has already thrown off its allegiance; and that, unless reinforcements be promptly sent, he has the gravest fears for the result. Kudurru, in answer to this urgent appeal, has sent a force to his assistance (*Epistolary Literature*, Part I, pp. 148, 149). At this time, of course, Šamaš-šum-ukīn was in open revolt, but it may well be that the way for such a state of affairs had been prepared long before by men of the stamp of Sin-balāṭṣu-iqbī. Indeed, it is not entirely impossible that the latter, whose sphere of activity would naturally lie in the vicinity of Ur, may have been the very emissary of whom Sin-tabnī-uṣur complains. It must be admitted, however, that this identification of Sin-balāṭṣu-iqbī, while it seems probable enough, cannot be regarded as an established fact.

NOTES.

1. 4. Lehmann (*Šamaššumukīn*, Part II, p. 58) and Jensen (*KB.*, Vol. III, p. 206) read "Ašur," but it is quite clear that Belit should be read here; see Brünnow's *List*, No. 7337.

1. 8. ḫannaka is taken by Jensen as an official title. It is, however, an adverb. ḫannaka = annaka "here," just as ḫannū = annū "this." See my thesis, *The Epistolary Literature of the Assyrians and Babylonians*, Part II, pp. 56, 63, and the remarks of Rev. C. H. W. Johns, *PSBA.*, Vol. XVII, p. 237.

1. 9. It is possible, of course, to take ibāšī as present instead of future, in which case we should have to understand that the report had already reached Sardanapalus. The general sense, however, would not be affected.

l. 10. Assemî (written a-si-me) = aštemî; see Delitzsch's *Assyr. Gram.*, § 51, 2.

l. 11. liqqâ. Harper reads here li-ik-liš, which does not agree with the context. Strassmaier's reading, li-iq-qa, is certainly correct. The form may be explained as standing for *liqûa = *liq'a = liqqâ, with assimilation of **ŋ** to **p**. See Delitzsch, *Handw.*, p. 582, and Jensen, *KB.*, Vol. III, p. 207, n.

l. 12. aḫāraḫāni. See my thesis (cited above), Part II, p. 64. To the examples there given may be added the following passage from Harper's *Letters* (No. 342, rev. 2-5): šû ṭemu anni'u iḫ-tar-ḡa, iqtebānāši, ina muḫḫi šarri beliḫa nissapra "he has gained this information, has reported to us, and we send (his report) to the king." See also Dr. Zehnpfund's note, *Beitr. zur Assyrl.*, Vol. I, p. 502.

l. 13. The expression mīnu ša šitini has not hitherto been explained. S. A. Smith renders "the number of the Šitini." Jensen takes ti, in this passage, as an ideogram and reads ša-lim balāṭini. Meissner, in his *Supplement* (p. 99), registers šitīnu (*sic!*) as a word "of obscure signification occurring in letters," and cites for it a number of passages. I believe that šitini is infin. ifteal of še'u "to seek" + the enclitic particle ni, and that mīnu ša šitini means "whatever is to be searched out," "all that can be learned," or, more freely rendered, "full particulars." For a similar use of ša with the infinitive the following two passages may be cited: anāku ša du'aki, ḫalqaku "I am a dead man, I am ruined!" (Harper's *Letters*, No. 166, rev. 3, 4).—ḫīṭu dannu ina bit beleḫa aḫteṭi; ša du'aki anāku, lā ša bulluṭi anāku; Šarru belī rēmu ana kalbišu issakan. ina kūmi anāku mīnu ana šarri beliḫa ušallim "I have sinned grievously against the house of my lords; I am worthy of death, I deserve not to be kept alive; (but) the king has shown mercy on his servant (literally, dog). What return can I make to the king my lord?" (K. 1201, obv. 3-7; Winckler's *Sammlung von Keilschrifttexten*, Vol. II, p. 42). See Meissner's *Supplement*, under dāku, p. 30. Mīnu ša šitini seems to have been a standing phrase of frequent occurrence, which explains the fact that ša is sometimes omitted. The following examples are to be found in Harper's *Letters*: mīnu ša ši-ti-i-ni, No. 337, rev. 10; 467, rev. 9; mīnu ša ši-te-i-[ni], No. 198, rev. 7; mīnu ša ši-ti-ni, No. 145, rev. 4; mīnu ši-ti-ni, No. 128, rev. 9, 11. akī ši-ti-i-ni (*ibid.*, No. 74, rev. 18) seems to have about the same meaning, though the passage is obscure.